

FOREST SERVICE ALERT & WARNING

Aug. 12, 2011

Forest Service Closes Additional Sites Because of Bear Activity

The USDA Forest Service National Forests in North Carolina today announced the closure of four more sites in the Appalachian Ranger District of Pisgah National Forest because of human encounters with bears over the past couple days. Effective immediately, the following sites are closed until Aug. 29, pending a reduction in bear activity:

- Briar Bottom Campground
- Black Mountain Campground
- Forest Service Road 472 (no entry, including hiking and camping)
- Neals Creek Road

A number of bear encounters have been reported this week in Yancey County. To ensure public safety, the Forest Service decided to close certain sites.

Today's announcement follows the Aug. 10 closure of four trails in the Appalachian Ranger District because of increased bear activity. The Aug. 10 closure included the following sites, which are now also closed until Aug. 29:

- Buncombe Horse Trail - from Forest Service Road 472 to the intersection the Big Tom Gap Trail (TR 1918)
- Mt. Mitchell Trail - from Black Mountain Campground to Mt. Mitchell State Park
- Mountain to Sea Trail - From State Hwy. 128 to Black Mountain Campground
- Higgins Bald Trail (TR 1908)

The closures are intended to provide for public safety by reducing human/bear interaction. Visitors to the national forests are encouraged to practice the following safety measures to reduce bear encounters:

- Make noise to avoid surprising a bear.
- Never approach a bear or other wild animal.
- Do not hike in the dark.
- Carry EPA-registered bear pepper spray
- Keep a clean camp site by properly disposing of food scraps and garbage. Do not leave food or garbage inside fire rings, grills or around your site.
- Never leave food or coolers unattended, even in developed picnic areas.
- If bear-proof containers are not available, store food and garbage inside a hard-top vehicle or trailer.
- Never store food inside a tent.
- Wipe tabletops clean before vacating a camp or picnic site.
- If a bear is observed nearby, pack up your food and trash immediately and vacate the area as soon as possible.

For more tips on bear safety, visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/outdoorsafety/wildlife.php>.

For more information on the Forest Service closures, contact the Appalachian Ranger District office at 828-682-6146.

#